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My View of Religion



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FOREWORD

The following manuscript contains a complete English translation of Mr. Nieh's little book on Religion. The translation still needs correction in various details but we have the author's permission to use it in its present form simply for private circulation. Although the translation needs to have further work done upon it, it may be taken as fully representing the author's point of view and it is for this purpose that it is being issued in its present form.

FOREWORD

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In reply to the many questions asked me about my point of view on religion, an article was written last winter. This I have taken to my missionary friends for comments and criticism, in hope that an intermedial and correct course may be reached, there being no partizan spirit whatever intentionally entertained in my mind. It has been a great regret to me that only a very few responded, and then not with satisfactory arguments but with vague and superficial words. I should say this is not the proper attitude one should take in seeking the truth, which can only be reached by frank expressions and thorough arguments.

However, I still have opinions and viewpoints to be set forth. It is my unshaken belief that there is one and only one truth in the universe. There can not be two, both being equally right. Now, Christians declare that Christianity is truth; that it is the only true religion in the world; and that if not believed, an unpardonable sin is committed. Young students, who are now receiving education, should, of course, aim at righteousness. But there are so many antagonistic doctrines and teachings, each contending for its own excellencies and claiming benefits to believers and dangers to opposers. What, then, should the students decide to follow?

Some Christians stress their own opinions in their teaching and eloquently pour out all sorts of exaggerations. They tell you that if you do not have faith in Christianity, if you oppose the rules of the church, you have done a wrong to heaven and will never be saved. Their object is to make people not dare but enter the church, and to refrain those, who are already their members, from studying the principles and teachings of other religions. Therefore, there are church members who clearly understand the truth of the Buddhist doctrine, "cause and effect," and yet who are afraid to speak it out. There are Christian families, who have for

generations received great benefit from the teachings of Confucius and yet dare not observe them any more. Even the offering of sacrifice to ancestors is considered to be offensive to God and the offender is said to be bound to receive punishment from heaven. Those vulgar, selfish, and jealous preachers invented such sayings as those above referred to in the hope that they can make their religion a monopoly. They say this is to revere God, but in reality it only gives a false idea of God. They claim they are preaching the truth, but as a matter of fact they are only obscuring it. Heaven, or the eternal principle of right is truth. Can that be called truth, which is nothing but narrowness, meanness, jealousy, and malediction?

I have formerly had much admiration and respect for Christianity, as I have been very much moved by the untiring spirit of serve and self-sacrifice of some of its workers. But alas! the good which the religion has for stirring men is stained by the incredible stories to its preachers, which have produced nothing but endless troubles and evils. All the religious wars recorded in the European history, which caused bitter sorrow to the people and led to barbarous killings, and which ultimately provoked peoples' reaction in altogether overthrowing religion, were caused by its preachers' own absurd conceits. I am, therefore, of the opinion that if we are to prevent Christianity from being completely stamped out, we must first of all make the preachers awaken. They should get rid of their nonsensical talks and narrow views. They must in all places and at all times respect our own national customs, taking the strong points to support themselves. Only thus can it be expected that they can preserve their religion.

When enlightened and far-sighted persons in this country discuss Christianity, they often use two words to sum it up, "narrow and mean," so much so that they even do not care to give any criticism, thus leaving its believers unable to locate where mistakes are and how to find out a way to what is good. In view of this sad fact, the present article is written.

CHAPTER II

The Object Of Religion

The greatest object of religion is to bring about happiness to mankind and peace to the world. Having only one chief object, the path to reach it is also only one. This has already been explained in book "Chung Yung." (Doctrine of the Mean) To desire peace and happiness for mankind is the will of heaven and the nature of man. It is said in the "Chung Yung:" "What heaven has conferred is called the nature." If we want to reach our object, we must follow the correct path; so it is stated "An accordance with this nature is called the Way." Religion is a guide to our goal, hence "To regulate and accord with this path is called religion." Since the object is one and the path is the same, how can there be any difference in view or any distinction of this or that? If there is no difference or distinction at all, how can there be any strife or hostility?

If there is any one who upholds a doctrine as true and considers himself to be right and others wrong, we must carefully investigate his tenets in order to decide whether his claim is genuine or not. Is it pervasive or absurd? universal or limited? practical or incredible? naturally evolved or erroneously devised? In case of being the former of these alternatives, it would be readily accepted and gladly obeyed by all hearers; and happiness and peace can be secured. This is in accordance with what heaven has conferred on us and is the right way. But if it be the latter of these alternatives, it is only a religion in name and is far away from the greatest object of religion. It only leads to strife and bloodshed, and brings disaster and misery to the world; and ultimately it will be completely stamped out. We all alike receive from heaven our nature; we all have our own power of judgment. We should, therefore, calmly make our own choice, so that we be not misled by specious language and deviate from the right path.

CHAPTER III

The Meaning of the Way of Heaven

Those who talk about doctrines and religion generally base their theories on the ordinances of Heaven. But these can only be so called in connection with man. Apart from man, there can not be said to be any ordinances of Heaven. In other words, these must be tested in man's heart and nature and be discovered in man's emotions. Otherwise, they can not be seen.

Why is it said that they must be tested in man's heart and nature? It is because, when the heart is sincere, it implicates nothing artificial and can thus attain to a position to form a ternion with Heaven and Earth; and when the nature is quiet and calm, it can not be contaminated by anything impure and is then able to have a feeling of assisting the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. The will of Heaven and that of the virtuous are absolutely coincident and have not the slightest deviation from each other.

Why is it said that the ordinances of Heaven are to be discovered in man's emotions? A man who is driven to extremities instinctively implores Heaven for help. When one gets good fortune, he spontaneously pours out thanks to Heaven. To do good is pleasing to man, and so Heaven bestows on the doer hundreds of blessings. To be wicked is averse to men, and so Heaven sends down hundreds of calamities to the evil doer. If good men are not duly rewarded and bad ones escape punishment, people would look to Heaven for justice. And Heaven has never failed to give them satisfaction in rewards and punishments. The will of Heaven and the feeling of men are at all times communicative with each other.

Ancient sages said: "The way of Heaven is distant; that of man is near by." "A man who likes to talk about Heaven must have had evidence in man." Confucius said: "To be

able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves,—this may be called the art of virtue.” Therefore, the teachings of both Confucianists and Buddhists do not speak of the way of Heaven but lay emphasis on the heart of man. Compared with material things, heaven is like a spotless mirror. What appears in it is the images of ourselves. If we want a better appearance or otherwise of the images, we can not demand it from the mirror. So it is that our own destiny and happiness can not be begged for from Heaven, but that we should seek them in ourselves. Confucius said: “What the superior man seeks, is in himself.” He also said: “In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the centre of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself.” Buddhist book said: “If you do not arouse your own innermost heart, even all the Buddhas in Heaven are unable to save you.”

So, Heaven is human minds’ aggregated nature, never deviating but always harmonious. God is the representative of this aggregated nature, and on the other hand is himself represented by them. What is meant by the almighty and the highest power is likewise the accumulation of human minds. Any individual’s personal nature is distributed to him from this vast aggregation. This is why we say what Heaven has conferred is called the nature. As to the deviation or variance of any individual’s nature from the path in which he should go, he must himself have caused this and can not blame Heaven, just as we can not condemn the mirror for the ugliness of our appearance. What is meant by the non-deviating and harmonious nature is sincerity and calmness. These two combined together is called virtue. When it moves in man’s nature and conscience, it is faithfulness and sympathy. When it is embodied in man’s conduct, it is divided into filial piety, fraternal submission, loyalty, truthfulness, propriety, righteousness, purity, and the sense of shame.

Therefore, speaking from the calmness of the nature, earth, men, and all things would each forget the existence of

the other. This is called the perfect goodness, the utmost sincerity, the infinite. Buddhists call it the true nature, the eternity. When the heart stirs in order to cope with the even changing things in the world, then we see filial piety, fraternal submission, loyalty, truthfulness, righteousness, purity, and the sense of shame.

Confucius said he was afraid of Heaven's ordinances. But when he talked about the method of how to get perfect virtue, he said that it is simply to subdue one's self and return to propriety. The Book "Chung Yung" has clearly explained what Heaven's ordinances are. They are nothing but to be in accordance with the nature and to regulate the path, so that we can walk in it. Mencius said: "The way to serve Heaven is to preserve one's mental constitution and nourish one's nature." Buddha said that the principal sect of "Dah Chen," (which means to cultivate one's self to an understanding of the truth of emptiness) is to tranquilize our heart and always keep it under control.

From the above, it would be perfectly clear that outside of our own heart and nature, it is impossible to seek for the way of how to serve heaven and how to clearly understand heaven's ordinances. Fully realizing this fact, one can then talk about the way of Heaven and religion.

CHAPTER IV

The Confucian Methods of Seeking Perfect Virtue.

It is a common saying that the aim of all religions is to induce people to be and to do good. This is absolutely true. Buddha said that a man should be benevolent to all things. If we carefully study his principles and teachings, there is not the slightest doubt that one should be so. But we could not expect ordinary persons to understand such lofty ideas and to be able to live up to them. I am, therefore, giving below some Confucianists' discourses in order to compare with what the Christians call "love." From this, we will see that when the Confucianists speak about perfect virtue, there are always given ways how to seek it and means how to be virtuous, unlike the Christians whose sayings on love are vague and unreal.

Our moral nature conferred on us by Heaven is prone to be suppressed by our cravings after material things. Although we always know that we should be virtuous, yet temptations are sometimes so strong that our mind can not control itself and goes astray. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that there must be some methods to preserve and nourish our nature, so that it would be always close to virtue and never get away from it.

Thus, in reply to his disciples' inquiries about perfect virtue, Confucius gave different methods. Those relating to preservation are as follows: "To subdue one's self and return to propriety; to seek virtue with a vigorous effort at the law of reciprocity; perfect virtue is the burden which a scholar considers it is his to sustain; is virtue a thing remote? I wish to be virtuous, and lo! virtue is at hand; the firm, the enduring, the simple, and the modest, are near to virtue; the man of virtue makes the difficulty to be overcome his first business, and success only a subsequent consideration;—"such are methods of how to seek for virtue.

Those relating to nourishing are: "The superior man helps his virtue by his friendship with others." "It is virtuous manners which constitute the excellence of a neighborhood. If a man in selecting a residence, does not fix on one where such prevail how can he be wise?" "The mechanic, who wishes to do his work well, must first sharpen his tool. When you are living in any state, take service with the most worthy among its great officers, and make friends of the most virtuous among its scholars." "There are few who being filial and fraternal, are fond of offending against their superiors or stirring up confusion. The superior man blends his attention to what is radical. That being established, all practical courses naturally grow up. Filial piety and fraternal submission are they not the root of all benevolent actions?" So much for the ways of how to be virtuous.

However, the most important ones are filial piety and fraternal submission. The reason why it is so is because when benevolence is spoken of in a vague way, it is apt to drift into falsehood and fame-seeking. Moreover, there must be a beginning from which benevolence starts. None would be dearer to a man than his own parents. If one but often recollects the love and affection his parents bestowed on him in embracing, suckling, feeding, and caressing him, his nature would become generous, though it might be cool before; his temperament would become gentle and kind, though dogged and obstinate it might be before. Take the reverence shown to the elders in your own family and exercise it towards those in other families, take the kindness shown to the young in your own family and exercise it similarly to the young in the families of others, and all peoples in the world would be friendly to each other and happy. This is the reason why our sages took filial piety and fraternal submission as the root of perfect virtue, and the source of peace and principles. Confucius said: "Let the ruler be filial and kind to all;—and all will be faithful to him."

So, "if there be a careful attention to perform the funeral rites to parents and if they be followed when long gone with ceremonies of sacrifice, the virtue of the people will resume its proper excellency." "When those who are in high stations perform well all their duties to their relations, the people are aroused to virtue." "If one's filial thoughts are not wanting, then his young generations are bound to prosper."

When people's character is upright and guileless, when their offsprings are blessed by their filial piety, then the universe would be filled with a spirit of kindness, happiness, sympathy, and contentedness. Those who are cruel and dangerous would be unseemly influenced and melted by this vast spirit into men of gentleness. In such a state, wars and bloodsheds would naturally become less and less. So, to lay particular emphasis on filial piety and fraternal submission is to nourish people's benevolent nature, while to offer sacrifices to ancestors is to preserve people's filial and fraternal spirit. Confucius said: "He who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and the meaning of the several sacrifices to ancestors, would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his palm."

— The reason why to sacrifice is so important is not that we expect blessings from spirits by means of the meals and incense offered, but that we can not bear to have the heart of forgetting our deceased elders. Therefore, at certain times during a year, sacrifices are offered, so as to serve our dear ones equally, alive or dead. How sincere it is!

Confucius hated deeply to unduly flatter spirits. He said: "If you have offended against God, there is no use to pray." "While you are not able to serve men," he said again, "how can you serve their spirits?" To sacrifice was looked upon so seriously is because it is the best way to nourish the filial and fraternal spirit and to encourage the faithful and sincere character.

Now, the pastors would say:—“Get rid of your ancestors’ tablets; stop your kneeling and bowing; cease the serving of rice and vegetables; put an end to the offering of incense and candles;, these are all wrong and offensive to God. If you wish to remember your deceased fathers, get their pictures and offer them fresh flowers, that will do.” Now, tablets, and the offering of incense and candles, rice and vegetables, are our national custom. What contradiction has this to the principles of righteousness? Further, where is the difference between tablets and pictures, incense and flowers? If there were Confucianists preaching their doctrines in Europe and America and if they were to tell the peoples there that they must offer to the deceased incense, candles, wine and bread instead of flowers, or they would offend against God, can this be called reasonable and in accordance with the truth? It only restricts and narrows their teachings! It merely reduces the true value of their doctrines!

The above is but one of the many narrow and absurd views of the Christian religion, and on account of which it can not be pushed far and wide in China. The reason for this is because its believers do not know the right way to serve heaven and men; they are ignorant of the methods by which to seek virtue and to be virtuous, therefore they wrangle about mere formalities but neglect the root of principles.

CHAPTER V.

Christianity's Mistake in Speaking of the Way of Heaven Apart from Human Affairs.

Christianity strives to teach people how to serve Heaven. But when it speaks of Heaven, it does not dwell on practical benefits but on empty glories of the future. What it encourages is not righteous conduct but only faith. In other words, it emphasizes the external but slights that which lies in man's innermost heart; it neglects the stem but cares about the foliage.

Its preachers say: "Those who have faith in Jesus Christ shall live an eternal life, shall be admitted to the Kingdom of God, shall be seated at the right hand of Christ, and in the day of judgment, shall enjoy all sorts of honor, glory and what not: and those who have not faith in Christ, shall receive all kinds of punishments and tortures, even men of righteousness shall not be pardoned." There is the saying that if one loves his parents more than his heavenly Father, he shall not be admitted to the Kingdom of God. One who was attracted to Christ asked to be allowed to bury his parent before following him. Jesus said to him that he should follow him and that he should let the dead bury themselves. This is because of the belief that if there is faith in God, there is everything. Christians think that God can arbitrarily send down blessings or calamities to a person, taking the receiver's faith or faithlessness as condition, and not basing it on his merits or demerits.

Martin Luther hated the cruel tyranny of the Catholic church and in opposition to it founded the Protestant Church. The Roman Catholics subjected his followers to all sorts of persecution—wholesale murders, ferocious tortures—even women and children were not exempt, in order to enforce their teaching that non-believers in their system are to be

punished, even good people not being excused. The Crusades extended several hundred years, innumerable lives were lost, not in the name of virtue and vice, but in the name of a difference in faith. England and Ireland are in the same group of islands, under the same ruler, and yet for hundreds of years there have been ceaseless fights and contests. Though free government is separately established, troubles are still lurking all the time. Why? It is because of religious squabbles.

In Europe and America, the custom is that parents bear with all their heart the task of bringing up and educating their children; but when they are at last brought up and educated, the children only expect inheritance and entertain no responsibility whatever of supporting and nourishing their parents. This is an evil which is caused by their own religious doctrines and which has, in consequence, developed into the negligence of parents. When our ancient sages drew up their principles, they had in their mind a view of weighing which is more important and which is less so. But though they laid special stress on the serving and supporting of elders and encouraged people to do so with might and main, there are still many who are unfilial and disobedient. How can we lightly regard such a virtue and give the unfilial a pretext to excuse themselves?

I have seen a certain Christian, venerated and highly respected by society, who dresses handsomely, eats fine food, is the owner of grand cars and beautiful houses; but whose parents are still doing servant work and are living by their own efforts. There is a certain Christian, who is the president of a university, but whose father acts as a gate-keeper for his son's institution. It is therefore no wonder that when Europeans and Americans speak about the sorrows of their helpless elders, they often admire our good custom in serving parents and supporting the aged. But they are not aware of the fact that this custom has been encouraged

and nourished for thousands of years. When it has once become the custom of the land, it is looked upon by all as a means to diseriminate good and bad persons. Therefore, the responsibility of serving and supporting one's elders has become an invariable duty to the young, absolutely voluntary. This is the reason why there is less misery and fewer complaints among the elders in this country than elsewhere in the world. Confucius said: "When you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits." How can there be a man who can truly love others while he is unable to love his own parents? How can there be a man who can genuinely love God while he is unable to love men truly? Therefore, to lay emphasis on filial piety is to cherish man's benevolent sense, and is the right way to serve God. The contrary only brings about indifference and coldness towards the world; and God would be bitterly grieved to see this.

Moreover, the New Testament compilers, ignorant of Christ's real purpose, have mixed therein their own opinions and produced all kinds of fallacious stories. Jesus regarded God with so much reverence that he called Him "Heavenly Father." His idea is to teach people that there is none on the earth more to be venerated and held dear by a man than his own parents. Jesus called himself the Son of Man. His purpose is to tell the world that there is no greater duty in the world than that of a son to his parents. Now his followers want to keep down their own parents in order to show that the Heavenly Father should be more venerated and respected: they want to keep back their own parents in order to show that the Heavenly Father should be placed in front of them. But, alas! they do not know that the honor and glory of their so-called Heavenly Father thereby become more degraded. Could that be the idea of Jesus Christ?

Suppose there is a man who has children as well as grandchildren. It is nature that the youngsters love their father more dearly than they love their grandfather. Can it be called reasonable and logical if we tell them that they

should not love their father more than their grandfather, and that if they have served well their grandfather, they have completely performed their filial duties on earth?

Some will say that Christianity likewise speaks about filial piety; that in the Ten Commandments the order of obeying parents was given; and that Paul taught men to obey and honor their parents. In answer, I should say that to love parents is man's nature—a nature that is possessed by everybody. I do not mean to say that Christians know nothing about it, but they do not know the importance to emphasize and lay stress on it, and that this nature has been darkened and obscured by their sayings that are contradictory to filial piety.

Furthermore, when Confucianists teach people to be filial, emphasis is laid on the earnestness of nature, the genuineness of affection, and the meeting beforehand of parents' wishes. When they speak about nourishing, they emphasize the caring for the parents' will in addition to caring for their bodies. There is the saying that even dogs and horses know how to nourish their parents and if there is no reverence, where is the difference between man and animals? How can Christians be called perfectly filial, when they only understand to nourish the bodies of their parents and just simply obey and honor them?

I have observed, therefore, that the result of the Christian religion so far is this: with the exception of some sincere pastors and lady followers, most of the others are false. They are only using their religious doctrines such as faith in God and the serving of Heaven as an excuse for their own selfishness; and only very few, if any, have actual sympathy with mankind. They are mostly borrowing the name of law to usurp and encroach upon others, and under the pretext of universal principles to carry out their own selfish ends. They have made the world treacherous, selfish, miserable, and merciless. This is all caused by their mistake in serving heaven apart from human affairs.

Some may say that Christians have established many hospitals, educational institutions and other philanthropic organizations. They are serving men as well as heaven. And the reason why Jesus ordered one of his disciples to disregard his deceased father and to follow him is because he wanted him to preach the gospel. In reply, I would say that a real skilful doctor would teach people how to avoid sickness before they are actually attacked by it. A man's sickness is the result of his own causing. If we simply cure the consequence and neglect the cause, we are only driving at a matter of secondary importance. As to the record of Christians' education, it has already been stated above. What are they teaching and preaching, then, when they have first themselves neglected their own parents? They do not teach people to serve heaven and love others by the cultivation of their own persons, in their attention of the world, and in their daily life, but they seek some other way to serve heaven and love men. The root is wrong and so countless evils are the result.

When Confucianists speak about the serving of heaven and the loving of men, they mean all the time—whether in action or in repose, in speaking or silence, in business intercourse or social relations. Their task is to preserve the heart, nourish the nature, subdue one's self and return to propriety: their method is to investigate things, extend their knowledge, rectify their hearts, be sincere in their thoughts, cultivate their persons, regulate their families, put their country in order, and finally make the world tranquil. There must be, first of all, generous, respectable, filial, fraternal, industrious and self-subduing individuals; and then there will come the honest, faithful, zealous, and public-spirited citizens. There must be, first of all, wholesome, respectful, complaisant, and harmonious families; and then there will come the country which is orderly in everything, political as well as educational, and in which every body is happy and content.

It is, therefore, said: "If one can subdue one's self and return to propriety, all under heaven will revert to perfect virtue." "The superior being sincere and reverential, the whole world is conducted to a state of happy tranquillity." "When those who are in high stations perform well all their duties to their relations, the people are aroused to virtue." "From the benevolent example of one family a whole state becomes benevolent, and from its courtesies the whole state becomes courteous." "When the ruler, as a father, a son, and a brother, is a model, then the people imitate him." "Therefore the institutions of the ruler are rooted in his own character and conduct, and sufficient attestation of them is given by the masses of the people. He examines them by comparison with those of The Three Kings, and finds them without mistake. He sets them up before heaven and earth, and finds nothing in them contrary to their mode of operation. He presents himself with them before spiritual beings and no doubts about them arise. He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage, a hundred ages after, and has no misgivings." He presents himself with them before spiritual beings, and no doubts about them arise. He knows heaven! He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, and has no misgivings. He knows men! And so he shows it to the people. It is the principle of the identity of heaven's ordinances and human affairs, the only way to be in accordance with nature and to regulate the path to righteousness. It is the same everywhere, east or west. Thousands of years may pass by, but it never changes. Therefore, the principle of the "Great Learning" gives a standard for bringing up men who embody virtue and can put it into practice; people can follow this standard to nourish their nature, extend their knowledge, and at length bring about enterprises and achievements. If one man among millions is successful to attain to such a height, then everything would rise up to follow him. There is no need to be at the mercy of the rich and beg for a little residue of their ill-gotten money in order that philanthropic works can be carried out.

When Tsze-chan was chief-minister of the state of Ch'ing, he would convey people across the Tsin and Wei rivers in his own carriage. Hearing this, Confucius said, "This was kind, but showed that he did not understand the practice of government." "When in the eleventh month of the year," he continued, "the foot-bridges are completed, and the carriage bridges in the twelfth month, the people have not the trouble of wading. How can he convey everybody across the rivers?"

When Confucianists speak about the serving of men, they take the masses into consideration, and strive after the root. But when Christians come to it, they leave the great and go after the small, neglect the root and are concerned about what springs from it. They honor and revere Jesus for his power in curing disease and driving out spirits, but they can not tell how to cure the sickness of one's nature and how to drive away the evil spirits of conscience. They pay regard to their religion because they trust that in believing it they shall be admitted to the kingdom of heaven and receive all sorts of blessings from God. But they can not understand that the kingdom of heaven is in their own hearts and that blessings should be sought for from themselves. Christianity is, therefore, contrary to logic and unnatural to reason, not only censured by the ceremonialists but rebuked by the scientists, and at last it would be completely expelled by social reformers. The great pity is that even its good points may also follow it to destruction. This is all because of the mistake of speaking about the will of heaven apart from human affairs.

CHAPTER VI

The Doctrine of "Cause and Effect"

Vs.

The Doctrines of Eternal Redemption Through the Savior
and

The Almighty Power in Giving Rewards or Punishments

The doctrine "cause and effect" is common in Buddhism and Confucianism. Confuciansts say that heaven sends down blessings to those who are doing good, and calamities to those who are doing evil; that those families which are abound in good deeds must have endless joys, while those which are abound in mal-practices are sure to have perpetual sorrow; and that the virtuous must have clever and upright offspring. When they speak about "cause and effect" their words are all from actual experience, though not as complete and full as those of the Buddhists who hold that the cycle of "cause and effect" takes three generations to complete. But that Heaven's standard in giving fortune or misfortune, rewards or punishments, must be based on virtue or vice, merits or demerits, is a principle that is recognised everywhere and at all times.

Christians, however, hold a different view. They say that Jesus was the only son of God, sent down to earth to redeem peoples' sins; that before his birth people were saved by their own righteousness, but that after his coming people shall only be saved by having faith in him and shall be only redeemed by his blood; and that if one has not faith in him, he shall not be saved and admitted to the kingdom of heaven; though he may be virtuous. So, when a would-be member is to be baptized and admitted to the church, he must be asked a few questions somewhat like the following: "Do you believe that Jesus was the only son of God? that he was born of a virgin? and that three days after his death, he rose again?" To these, one must blindly answer "yes." And then he will be called a member of the church, a righteous man, and shall be saved and admitted to the kingdom of heaven!

If, however, he cannot satisfy himself and frankly tells the pastor that he can not completely believe and in addition is unable to understand the reason of all these questions, the pastor would declare that this man has not fully obtained the Holy Spirit and can not be admitted to the church. In other words, even though this man is filial, fraternal, loyal, faithful, etc., still he can not be considered virtuous. He shall not be saved and admitted to the kingdom of heaven but shall go to hell. This clearly blames sincerity and encourages falsehood. How can it be expected that people will not be hypocritical? A western proverb says that those who are near to the church are remote from God. We are deeply grieved at the abundance of hypocrites. Did not Mencius say: "What have you to do with his purpose? He is of service to you. He deserves to be supported and should be supported. And let me ask,—Do you remunerate a man's intention, or do you remunerate his service? There is a man, who breaks your tiles, and draws unsightly figures on your walls: his purpose may be thereby to seek for his living, but will you indeed reward him?" To say that to bestow rewards or punishments depends upon faith and not on merits or demerits and that having faith in Jesus, even sinners shall be pardoned and in addition receive rewards, is like rewarding one who breaks our tiles and draws unsightly figures on our walls. Can it be reasonable? and yet church members do actually say that Christianity emphasizes faith and not works. It seems to be that if one firmly believes in the way of heaven, he will do good to his utmost; and that if one has firm faith in God, he will be afraid of His majesty power and will not dare to do evil. It is possible to speak of faith in this way. But those who want to make their religion a monopoly, are neither willing to speak of the way of heaven alone, nor willing to simply speak of God; they must say that Jesus is God, and that he is God's only son; that to have no faith in Jesus is to disbelieve the way of heaven; and that to doubt the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin is to

refuse to accept the way of heaven. This is all very well for the sake of the church. But it is contradictory to the purpose of religion, for it only produces vast multitudes of people who nominally have faith in heaven but who are in reality unable to do good with all their heart. Why? because it is not the way of heaven itself but something which has nothing to do with it that people are urged to have faith in. Let me give an example to illustrate this.

Suppose there is a man who has two servants. The one is very diligent at his work, thinking that since he is being remunerated by his employer, he should perform his duties faithfully; but he does not take heed of the employer's family history, his mother's virtue, his power, and ability. The other servant all the time praises his employer's family virtues, is in awe of his power, and recognises his wonderful talent and exceptional ability; but as to his duties, he is simply neglectful and lazy. Can we call it reasonable and logical if the master rewards the laudatory but unfaithful servant, and punishes the one who diligently performs his duties but lacks in laudatory expressions?

When Christians speak about repentance, they talk of prayers to the Savior for pardon. If one but has trust in the Savior, he will be pardoned and saved, even though he may have committed thousands of the greatest sins and crimes. The explanation is that since Jesus shed his blood to redeem people from their sins, so those who have faith in him shall be redeemed and pardoned.

But Confucianists and Buddhists emphasize the work of one's self and think lightly of any outside influence. They lay great stress on self-cultivation and sincere repentance. So there are the following sayings: "I have long prayed". "He who has offended against heaven, there is one to whom he can pray." "If some one were to walk for you, you would not reach your destination; if others were to eat for you, you would not be satisfied; if you do not arouse your own

innermost heart, even all the Buddhas can not save you." So, Confucianists and Buddhists encourage people to do what is difficult, while Christianity rewards people for doing easy things. For the things which pertain to virtue, and which are living, constructive, and positive, are difficult; those who relate to wickedness, and which are dead, destructive, negative, are easy matters. To be bad is like water running down a slope, easy and unresisting. There are many people who, although they clearly understand that the sower of the wind will reap the whirlwind, yet commit sins and crimes. Now Christianity tells people that sins and crimes can be easily pardoned, thus giving them something to rely upon and making them fearless to commit evils.

Syphilis is a horrible disease. But there are doctors who, for the sake of making money, tell people that it can be easily cured by medicine. And then profligates, thinking they have nothing to fear, do what they like. Good doctors would tell people that it is hard to preserve one's health, but easy to spoil it; that if once infected with syphilis, one's health will be greatly impaired and can never be fully recovered, though medicine can do something to take away its poison. It is true that medicine can be easily obtained but one gets the injury all the same. Self-control is undoubtedly hard, but one can thus get away from disasters. Make people understand this, and they will willingly plunge into things hard and avoid what is easy.

This is the way that Confucianists teach people. "The man of virtue makes the difficulty to be overcome his first business, and success only a subsequent consideration; to work hard is near to virtue; to subdue one's self and return to overcome one's passion by reasoning; to be always progressing,—such were the tasks that the ancients endeavored to perform. The said that to do good is like to climb up to the heaven. One may not be able to force upwards one inch or one tenth of a inch, but the effort is better than by

a little slackness to fall down thousands of fathoms. This shows that to be virtuous, one should be on the alert all the time. If there is nothing remiss, well and good. But if one's effort should slaken a little and he falls into wickedness, then it is necessary for him to repent bitterly in his heart and make radical corrections of his conduct. It would not do simply to make confessions before God and offer prayers. Understanding this, one would see the mistake of the doctrine that one will receive reward by simply having faith in God, and that one's sins can be pardoned by mere prayers. Christianity encourages men to do easy things. But there never has been a man who is successful in his moral endeavors without encountering and overcoming difficulties.

As to their doctrine that sin entered into the world through one man, the first ancestor, it is purposely devised to support their belief that eternal redemption can only be obtained through the savior. Since sin passed into all men through the first ancestor, then all were equal sinners. Why then, among men in the world, are there good and evil, clever and stupid, not all equal? If believers were redeemed by Jesus and justified by his blood, why are their children still sinful and not different from others? This doctrine of the Fall is simply too absurd and void of reason. God loves the world. He knew that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could not be eaten. Why should he, then, create this tree at all and put it near Adam? Why should he not plainly tell Adam the reason why it could not be eaten, and not deceive him by saying that there was poison in it? God loved Adam. Then why should he create the serpent to allure him? God is present everywhere and knows everything, then at the time when Eve was allured by the serpent, why did He not prevent it? When Adam and his wife had already eaten the fruit of the tree, God should have had pity on their innocence, had sympathy with them, and mercifully pardoned them; He should not hate and curse

them. Even if Adam and Eve sinned, then God is almighty and it would not be hard for them to offer a prayer and have their sin redeemed. Or, God could easily transform them into dust again and make a new pair. There is absolutely no need of curse and hate. Then again, why should He make their offspring suffer and be wicked and then send down his only begotten son to redeem sinners by shedding blood? If we compare this with a man's disease, it would be like this: a man suffers, say, syphilis, which can be cured by injecting medicine; but the doctor does not do so and lets the poison spread until the sufferer has gone through all sorts of pains and tortures. How can God be so stupid and hard-hearted? Ridiculous as this doctrine is, yet Christians are still adhering to it firmly. This is because upon this very doctrine is based their faith in eternal redemption through the great Savior. If it be overthrown, then everything will have lost what is relied upon for proof.

Confucianists and Buddhists both contend that man's nature is good. Confucianists say: "What heaven has conferred is called the nature; by nature men approximate to each other; it is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature, in order to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth and form a ternion with them." By the most complete sincerity is meant to return to man's original nature and to rid of everything artificial. So it was said that sincerity is the virtue of nature. Mencius said that the feeling of commiseration, that of shame and dislike, that of modesty and complaisance, and that of approving and disapproving are possessed by everybody. They are the principles of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. Those, who seek for them, get them; and those who do not, lose them; those who are nourished by them, will grow; and those who are not, will vanish. It is not the fault of nature, which makes men wicked. Buddhists say that there is originally

no difference between Buddha and other living things, each having an equal soul and nature. So, they take the appearance of our original nature and the clearness of one's heart as the best path to righteousness. This is exactly the same as what the Confucianists hold, because their principles are all obtained from practical experience of their own nature and soul, and have no invented exaggerations.

Man's nature is originally good. But why are there still many wicked? It is because of two reasons: one is the effect of man's own causation and the other is the effect caused by his close relatives. When western psychologists speak about heredity, they dwell long on the fact that harmony causes happiness and that discordance brings about woe to the young generation. This is just like our principles of the influence of one's temper to another, and the correlation of cause and effect.

In a word, treacherous and jealous acts have not lessened since the redemption by the great Savior; and on the contrary murders and wars have been daily increasing since the founding of the Christian church. As to generous and benevolent virtues, the western Christian peoples have far less than Chinese. In regard to the custom of filial piety, fraternal, [and affectionate feelings to relatives, the self-styled Christian families are not as good as our people in general. Thus, it will be seen that the doctrine of obtaining eternal redemption through the great Savior has done nothing towards the righteousness and happiness of mankind; while the Confucian teachings—to preserve one's heart and nourish one's nature in order to serve heaven,—and the Buddhists' dogma—the clearness of one's heart and the appearance of one's original nature,—are all agreeable to man's feeling and reasoning, and can be proved by actual experience.

CHAPTER VII

The Conclusion.

I have taken much trouble in writing this article. Christians may say that I am fond of disputes, while Confucianists may call it a mis-statement. But I can not help saying all this. Every religion has its own strong points. I have formerly had much admiration for Christianity because of its great organization and strong foundation. I was of the opinion that if it should be wisely utilized, it could greatly help what education is unable to reach. I really can not bear to see that it is restricted and bounded by narrowness and meanness, and gradually bring destruction on itself. Moreover, I am really grieved to see that those self-conscious Christians are entirely ignorant of Christ's purpose. Jesus Christ was a great religious revolutionist, a great social reformer. Now his lofty thoughts, benevolent spirit, and high attainments are all destroyed by the church. At the time of Jesus Christ, priests took the temple as a monopoly and employed law as their weapon. Christ said to men that every man could serve heaven by himself. How was it that one must wait for the offering of sacrifice by the priests and the organization of the temples? Why should one depend upon the law which was dead? At that time the Pharisees were just as mean and narrow-minded as the Christians of to-day. If there were people who honored virtue and did not regard the temple with respect, the priests would inflict upon them all sorts of punishments by the weapon of law. Jesus denounced them for their falseness and was thus bitterly hated and at last killed by them. His revolutionary spirit is just like that of Martin Luther's. Because of his benevolent heart, Jesus hated extremely the screening of the truth and the fooling of people by the Pharisees. So, he wanted people to know that the way to serve heaven was not by formalities, but by the actual practice of virtue and righteousness.

Now, let us see how are the churches of to-day? Jesus advocated liberality, but the churches of to-day are illiberal and hold that if not baptized by a pastor, one can not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus denounced regulations, but the churches of to-day emphasize them, and say that if one does not answer orally certain questions, he shall not be redeemed. Jesus neglected formalities, now his followers lay much stress on them, but lightly regard the natural actions in practical conduct.

At the time of Jesus Christ, there were people who hated the tyranny of the priests and the temples and followed Christ. After his death, his disciples, like Peter and Paul enthusiastically preached the gospel, and thus the Christian Church gradually came into power. Then, the Pharisees who of old had regarded religion as their business, turned their attention to the new sect, to benefit by using the name of Jesus Christ. They invented all sorts of false sayings and called them the New Testament, with the idea of profiting thereby, just like the utilization of law by the priests of the old religion. I am afraid that Christ's soul in heaven is aching and grieving at all this.

Christ's true idea can be seen in the account of his temptation by the devil, and in his sermon on the mount. But his believers are now doing the very reverse of the purpose of Christ. When the devil asked Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus said: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Now the New Testament compilers twice mention the wonder that Jesus fed four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fishes, but do not give in detail his instructions. And when the devil asked Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus replied: "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." This was because he did not like to belittle himself by wonders and miracles. But the New Testament is

full of miracles in order to praise the power of Christ. When Jesus went up into the mountain, he said to his disciples that those who are humble in spirit, who are meek, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are merciful, and who are pure in heart, will be blessed by God; and that the kingdom of heaven is theirs. This clearly shows to people that the way to serve heaven is not by formalities, but in one's own heart and nature. It depends upon self-cultivation, and not on outside influence. Now, the New Testament compilers said that if one has not faith in Christ, he shall not be saved, for one could not redeem himself through his own righteousness. We thus see that there was originally an upright, easy, broad, and lofty idea in Christ's teaching; but its true value has been obscured by the narrow, mean, absurd, and illogical theories invented by his disciples.

At the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty, patriots hated greatly the corruption of the government and its officials; and in order to wipe out all political corruption and cleanse society, they have brought about the revolution. Now that the Republic has been established, those old, corrupt officials who joined the revolutionists are working hand in hand with them, in order to push their own selfish purpose. In consequence, they have made the political situation worse than ever. The real purpose of the revolution has been completely lost. And what is left is but an empty name, "the Republic." This may be called a vivid picture of Christianity.

If Jesus were to rise again to-day, I am sure that he would accuse the so-called bishops, fathers, and pastors as he did the Pharisees, and that he would drive all of them out of the church, so that they could no longer be the obstacles to the serving of heaven and a clear understanding of the path to righteousness.

Jesus so hated formalities and laws that he explained many times that they were useless. He said that he would employ love to perfect the law. His idea in saying this was

that in love there is law but in law there is not love. He did not expect that his followers would utilize his name to befool people and delude the world by misinterpreting his teachings.

At the end of the Ming Dynasty, Christianity came to the East, bringing with it western science and arts. At the close of the Ch'ing Dynasty, European and American nations became the great powers of the world. Young Chinese, who wanted to pursue science and arts, usually went into mission schools. So, through inducements and influence, many have become Christians. Yet notwithstanding the support of strong governments and the help of educational and philanthropic works, notwithstanding the tens of thousands of churches established in this country, and in spite of the fact that it has been vigorously pushed forward for hundreds of years, still Christianity has reaped a very poor result. Why? because our own national teachings, which are upright, broad, and lofty, have rooted deep in the hearts of the people and are not to be easily shaken by their mean and absurd theories.

I have long had the will of learning the way to righteousness. When I became an adult, I sought for it in the teachings of the scholars of the Sung Dynasty, but was not very successful. Then, I have been engaged in science and industry for nearly twenty years. Later, I was greatly moved by a few Christian preachers because of their untiring service and devotion, and so followed them to study Christianity. I greatly admired Jesus for his revolutionary spirit, his power and ability in overthrowing old customs, in reforming society and guiding people to the right path. I was of the opinion that with such a spirit, such a strong foundation, it would not be hard to utilize its great organization to aid what education and society could not do, and help to the salvation of the country. As to its mean and absurd doctrines, I have never believed and followed. On the contrary, I have always been hoping that some one may arise from

among the Christians, who would wipe out all the mistakes, preserve the quintessence, and bring about another great reformation like Jesus Christ and Martin Luther. It has been a great regret to me that such a man is not to be seen.

Recently, heresies, such as family revolution, no more filial piety, etc. have been springing up by leaps and bounds. I am really afraid of their evil consequences. Though they have nothing to do with Christianity, yet its errors such as those mentioned above, Christ's manner towards his mother as recorded in the New Testament, together with the teaching that one should respect and honor God more than his parents, have a great deal to do with confusing people's minds, and at the same time they give a handle to its opponents for attacking. Therefore, I can not but write this article to widen its view, and recite the teachings of our own sages to correct its wrongs and explain its doubts. If there are those who criticize me as being fond of disputes, or those who reprove me for my mis-statement, how dare I refuse to accept their remarks?

and others left the institution because they could not stand
such treatment and opened their own camp at a remote
and desolate spot in the hills. Here they continued to subsist
on what they had to eat and were a constant source of trouble to the
people in the surrounding villages who were forced to provide
them with food. The soldiers were told that the rebels had
not been given any supplies by the French Government. In order to make a place more
convenient for the rebels to live in, the French Government sent a detachment of
soldiers and engineers to construct a fortification which
was completed in a very short time. This fortification was
well built and well garrisoned. The rebels were not able
to capture it, but they did capture a small fort which
was situated on a hill. This fort was captured after a
long and hard fight. The rebels were able to capture
it because they had a large number of men and
the fort was not well garrisoned. The rebels were
able to capture it because they had a large number of men and
the fort was not well garrisoned.

